SPIRIT OF THE PRESS.

Editorial Opinions of the Leading Journals upon Current Topics-Compiled Every Day for the Evening Telegraph,

RANK IN THE NAVY.

From the N. Y. Tribune. A bill to regulate the rank of staff officers in the navy has passed the House of Representatives, and is expected to go through the Senate, with possibly some slight amendments. So a long quarrel and a long injus-tice will come to an end. The bill proposes only to place staff officers on a recognized and positive footing as to rank, giving them no command, no right to interfere with the line, no increase of pay or privileges. It provides that a surgeon in our navy shall enjoy the same recognition that is given to a surgeon in the army or a surgeon in any foreign service. The relative positions of staff and line officers in the army were settled twenty years ago, and there has been harmony between the two classes of the service ever since. In the British army and navy a similar adjustment, after long controversy, was made at the instance of the Duke of Wellington and Sir John Pakington, with equally good results. There is in fact no reason in the world, drawn either from abstract principle or experience, why medical officers, engineers, paymasters, chaplains, mathematical professors, and constructors should not have the positive rank which befits the importance of their duties and the length of their service.

But in the case of our navy there are reasons much stronger than prevail abroad why the two classes of officers should be placed on an equality. The opposition on the part of the line to this simple measure of justice springs from an impression that line officers of the navy are the aristocracy of America—a class of men above other men, and educated, if not actually born, to command. Graduation at Annapolis is a sort of patent of nobility, carrying social distinction and precedence. Civilian officers, therefore, must be made to feel their inferiority to the privileged caste. If the regulations of the service allow them to wear gold bands and gilt buttons, and to assume a sort of undefined and purely complimentary dignity known as traceinisted. plimentary dignity known as "assimilated rank," it is only (as Admiral Porter said) "to identify them with their surroundings and give propriety to their presence." This dangerous and growing aristocratic sentiment has led many statesmen to doubt the propriety of keeping up any Naval Academy at all. Its best corrective is the introduction into the best corrective is the introduction into the best corrective is the introduction into the service, on terms of perfect equality, of good healthy civilian — or, as Admiral Porter would say—plebeian blood. Personally, the staff comprises some of the best men of the service. They must, from the nature of their duties, be educated at least as well as the line, and probably the average of accomplishments is much higher in the officers who have been trained in our civil schools. who have been trained in our civil schools than in those who have obtained their education at Annapolis. They are likely to raise instead of lowering the character of any class with which they are incorporated. Admiral Farragut was strongly in favor of such a measure as is now before Congress; and if the American people want any other reason for approving it, they will find one in the fact that Admiral Porter is very much opposed to it.

"MORRILL" FORCE.

From the N. Y. Herald. Are we awake? We have been in the habit of considering ourselves not only awake, but wide awake. Nevertheless, we are compelled to suppose that we are walking about in a state of chronic somnambulism-that all life is illusion. Is it the fact that a live member of the House of Representatives, a veritable being in the flesh, a pantaloon-wearing, balance-at-his-banker-possessing, tariff-con-cocting, procreating, eating, drinking, di-gesting, sleeping human being—a man made in the image of a common sense Creator and of the same pattern as ourselves—has really brought in a bill making it penal to sell or give intoxicating squors for drink to all the civil and military officers of Government? Is that so? Or have all the newspapers of the United States been made the victims of a stupendous hoax played upon them by their correspondents at Washington? Of the two suppositions we really do not know which is the more difficult to entertain. But upon a sober consideration of the probabilities of the case, we are compelled to believe that the correspondents have not confederated to make game of their employers and the forty million citizens of the United States. No; it must be that it is the Representative who has gone to the mad, not the correspondents who have all, like the pack of wild swine that went over the precipice, gone to the bad; for the correspondents owe a duty to their editors, failing in which they can be deprived of their salaries; whereas members of Congress, we are fast getting to think, owe us no duty, or at least think they owe none to any one in the heavens above or the earth below.

It is, then, Mr. Morrill who has unhappily become a victim of mental aberration. are sincerely sorry. That gentleman has, evidently, parted with his senses, and his friends must lose no time in taking the steps which the law provides for distressed families on such melancholy occasions. Much learning made Paul mad, according to Festus. Much pondering on moral duties has evidently disturbed the mental balance of the eminent person from Maine. This prophet of total abstinence has imbibed morality in such reckless and profligate quantity that he has become the victim of a newform of delirium-not the delirium tremens of alcohol, but the delirium tranquillum of fanaticism. It is a curious case for pathologists-very curious-and we shall await with eagerness the comments of our brain doctors upon this original form of brain disease, which it is a prond thing for our great country to introduce to the atten-tion of medical mankind.

In what other way are we to treat this amazing incident? It is not possible—no, it is not possible—for any sane man to suppose that such a proposal can be passed into law by a body of legislators. It is not pos-sible for any sane man to imagine that it could be executed if it did. It is absolutely unnecessary to comment upon such a proposal as the offspring of a serious legislative purpose emanating from a mind in a coadition of normal health. But we cannot consent to forego our own privilege of reason, in spite of such eminent and respectable temptation to make fools of ourselves. We are sane, and by the blessing of God mean to remain so as long as we can. How long that will be while this epidemic of contagious legislative irrationality is in the air we don't know. But we will do our best. "Tis a mad world, my masters." But we are still sensible enough to ask what is the meaning and what is to be

the end of these inexcusable vagaries? Why are the forty millions of sensible business people who inhabit the country to be disgraced and worried by such freaks of legislative impertinence as this? Why is Congress to be turned into an arena for crats. It will be seen, therefore, that if the half-cracked people to crack bad jokes in the face of an overtaxed and insulted public? Is there any remedial agency anywhere which will stop this morbid development of foolishness in high places? Or are we to go on until our whole public business breaks down under the weight of public contempt? Do not let anybody mistake. There is something rotten in the state of Denmark when anybody going about at large can do such a thing as propound a crazy bill to make it a penal offense for Government officials to take a drink. And that rotten thing in Denmark's state was Hamlet's misfortune—a doubtful condition of sanity—that very doubt which we are compelled to raise about the gentleman from Maine. In the name of the public weal we demand that people who deal with political

affairs should try to think soberly upon the proprieties and practicalities of public life, as they are condemned, under the heavy penalties of insolvency and social ostracism, to deal soberly and decently with their private affairs. When Mr. Morrill proposed to make it its crime eminet the present a social ostracism. it "a crime against the peace of society" to offer the Commander-in-Chief of United States army, for example, a glass of wine, does he not know, to speak seriously, that he is himself guilty of a crime against human reason itself? If he does not know it, do his constituents know it? If they know it, will they discredit themselves and all of us by keeping such a Representative? If neither he nor they know it, is there any one who can and will teach them? And if there is not, what, in the name of the multiplication table, of the laws of gravitation, of all fixed facts and laws, is to

become of them and all of us?

Indeed, what would become of Washington in particular and mankind in general if the firm connection so happily established among us between whisky and politics were to be broken down? "Shall there be no more cakes and ale," Oh Pharisee of the Pharisees? Was his Majesty King David a profane, not a sacred, majesty, when he declared with strong judicious Hebrew sense that wine maketh glad the heart of man? The sting is taken out of the Puritans pretty considerably, thank goodness. They cannot burn wrinkled old women for witches, so they are reduced to trying to "rob the poor man of his beer."
They will fail. The "bar," literally, of public opinion will be too strong for them; and, though we may shock some foolish souls by saying it, we prefer the simple intoxication produced by whisky to the compound mental drunkenness of people who think they can change human nature by acts of Congress. At all events it is less mischievous. The one is the master of the china shop who goes into a passion and cracks a cup or two; the other is the raging bull that breaks into the shop and smas hes everything.

THE CONDITION OF MISSISSIPPI.

From the N. Y. World. Governor Alcorn, of Mississippi, is a recognized authority on matters pertaining to the industrial condition of the South, especially as regards cotton, and in a copy of his message just sent into the Legislature we find some interesting statements and statistics respecting his State. The full returns of the census not having as yet come into his possession, Governor Alcorn selects seven counties in Mississippi, "bottom land and upland, ridge and prairie, negro county, white county, and mixed county," from which the returns are complete, and by a comparison in these widely scattered sections of the census of 1860 and that of 1870 arrives at some general view of the condition of the whole State. Cotton he shows to have fallen off 63 per cent, from its yield in 1860; corn, 65 per cent.; hogs, 65; wheat, 86; sweet po-tatoes, 64; peas and beans, 89, and home manufactures, 62. "Whether a deficiency of capital or a deterioration of labor" be the cause of this general decadence his Excellency does not at first say, but further on in his message thinks that, "on the whole, how-ever, the general decline shown points painfully to not only a falling off in the amount of our colored labor, but to a character of falling off among the whites which is sug-gestive of a breaking down in the spirit of the people." The almost entire destruction of orchards, the decrease in the article of honey of 86 per cent., and of 96 per cent. in cheese, are indeed sad testimonies to the existence of some evil sapping the foundations of household thrift. Counting from 1865 in thirteen counties, taken as they come, Governor Alcorn finds that while white dram-shops have increased from 81 to 488, negro drinking-places have swollen from 5 to 31. Crime, taking a score of counties for example, he describes as "shockingly great in its amount," but "nevertheless being brought within the cognizance of the law," offenses in the nature of murder and felonious assault in 1870 being 236, of which 128 were by whites and 108 by blacks. In the articles of marriage and education Governor Alcorn describes the colored population as doing well, but finds that, "while the nursing care of the negro infant under slavery resulted in the raising to ages between 1 and 5 of 0.48 per cent. more than that of the whites, the nursing care of the negro infant under freedom has resulted, so far, in the raising to ages between 1 and 5 of 1.73 per cent. less." The peace of the State is declared undisturbed by any organized opposition to the laws, and the Legislature is urged to economy, the civil list for 1870 amounting to \$1,061,249, against \$527,607, or something less than half that, in 1866. Taken altogether, this exhibit of Mississippi affairs is not a pleasant one; but as Governor Alcorn is candid enough to show things just

THE PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION-THE REPUBLICANS ALARMED. From the N. Y. Sun.

as they are, it is to be hoped that his ability

to ameliorate the situation may be found

equal to the frankness with which he de-

In a little more than a year hence the Presidential candidates of both parties, and of all parties, if there should happen to be more than two, will be in the field, and the country will have fully entered upon the campaign of 1872. It is beyond question that the successful candidate in that contest will be chosen by a smaller majority of the electoral votes than any President has received since James K. Polk defeated Henry Clay. This fact is impliedly admitted by the nervous manner in which some Republican journals, and especially the Tribune, are handling the election returns of the past year and trying to draw encouragement from their ugly-looking figures. No apportionment of members of Congress having been yet made under the new census, prophecies concerning the future must be mainly based upon the

imperfect data furnished by the existing apportionment. In the elections of the past year, twenty

Democrats can retain in 1872 all the States they carried in 1870, they will prevail in the next Presidential contest, provided they can make an additional gain of fourteen electoral

Can the Democrats make such a gain? Assuming that they will show good sense in the erection of their platform and the selec-tion of their candidate, the Southern States afford the most available field for them to make the necessary break in the Republican lines. Among the States carried by the Republicans the past year were Arkansas, Mississippi, and Texas. With no changes elsewhere in 1872, these alone, if wrested from the Republicans, will more than suffice to elect the Democratic ticket.

Can the Democrats hope to make gains in the South? The negro vote is a very unsta-ble foundation on which to anticipate the continued supremacy of the Republican party. Though the elections of the past year demonstrate the truth of this proposition, neither party seems to comprehend the principle from which it springs. Considering the circumstances under which the negrees of the Serthern States obtained the groes of the Southern States obtained the elective franchise, it is entirely natural, and indeed highly creditable to them, that for one, two, and perhaps three elections, they should vote the Republican ticket almost to a man. This they would regard as the payment of a debt, which they might well believe they owed to the Republican party. But after they had discharged this obligation, and when they began to find that nothing specially beneficial to the great mass of them was likely to flow from this exclusive devo-tion to one party, then, if they were satisfied that the Democrats would make no attempt to deprive them of their rights, they would pradually become subject to the same influences which control the votes of other races of men; and with these influences fairly in operation the result would be that a portion of them, perhaps only a small portion at first, would vote the Democratic ticket.

This is the key which solves the problem of the recent elections in the South. A margin, a small margin doubtless, of the negro element, fell away from the Republicans. A portion of it refused to vote at all, while another portion took an advance step and voted with the Democracy. To secure the whole of this margin, and by a bold blow to crumble a still larger fragment from the Republicans, is the policy through which the Democrats may reasonably hope to carry every Southern State in 1872, and thereby make up the possible loss of one er two Northern States like Connecticut and Nevada, and come out of the struggle victorious.

In view of the situation, we do not wonder that the Tribune is nervous and restive, and seems almost ready to give signs of woe that

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